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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the educational and social philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft, an English writer of the 18th century. Her works included "Vindication of the Rights of Man," and her best know work, "Vindication of the Rights of Woman" which was published in 1792 and consisted of the first sustained argument for female emancipation based on a cogent ethical system. Wollstonecraft was the first woman to pick up the mantle of egalitarianism challenging the prevailing ideology of the divine right of kings and the inherent natural rights of man and woman. She believed that the development of reason would enlighten man of his error, and only by his acting upon his reason, would virtue be gained and injustice abolished. Wollstonecraft perceived education as the apex in creating a new world order. She believed that the education females received in 18th century England subjugated them to male authority by denying them the development of their ability to reason. She perceived education as improvement of the individual and improvement of the social order. The new educational paradigm which Wollstonecraft envisioned was one based on reason and coeducation. In her time period, any of the suggestions given by Wollstonecraft were considered extremist; yet today, over 200 years later, they formulate many of our educational precepts. Reading "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," one discovers that her argument for the emancipation of women is based on the right to education. She envisioned a national system of education whose focus would be on the formation of good citizens. (DK)

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Visions of Mary Wollstonecraft: Implications for Education

Alice L. Manus
Educational Curriculum & Instruction
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843

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Visions of Mary Wollstonecraft: Implications for Education

by

Alice L. Manus

Texas A&M University

"You know I am not born to trod in the beaten track-the peculiar bent of my nature pushes me on."

Mary Wollstonecraft

The primary trap that interpreters and critics alike fall into upon evaluating the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, is that of judging her writings from a chronological standpoint, rather than as timeless documents whose value withstands any effects of antiquarianism. The award-winning Southern writer William Faulkner once penned, "There is no such thing as was, really, because the past is." Indeed, were we to regard the effects of great works as only being felt in the time period in which they were written, humankind would never advance; rather it would lay in a state of perpetual stagnation, as opposed to building a solid foundation on the shoulder of giants. Mary Wollstonecraft was one such immortal whose writings hold meaning for the present and future.

Historically she is known as the author of the 1792 classic, Vindication of The Rights of Woman, which "was the first sustained argument for female emancipation based on a cogent ethical sytem."[1]

Mary Wollstonecraft challenged the prevailing ideology of the moral and intellectual inferiority of women. Yet recognizing her only in this vein diminishes her impact.

Mary Wollstonecraft was the first woman to pick up the mantle of egalitarianism, challenging the prevailing ideology of the divine right of kings and the inherent natural rights of man and woman. *"I build my belief on the perfection of God."*[2] Through her writings, primarily Vindication of the Rights of Man and Vindication of the Rights of Woman, she advocated "the replacement of an aristocracy of inherited property and titles with a meritocracy based on reason."[3] The emancipated woman would be an active participant in this meritocracy, sharing the same rights in the public and private arena of her oppressor, the male. Women would be given the same opportunities as men, with gender being relegated to secondary status.[4]

> *"Consider - whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason?"* [5]

The eighteenth century of Mary Wollstonecraft was an era of revolutions. Not only did the American and French Revolutions challenge centuries-held customs, ideology, and institutions, but the Industrial Revolution usurped the underpinnings of Britian, as peasantry gave way to urbanization and a new category of "society's ills" surfaced. Deleterious working conditions for the poor were

rampant. Burdened with its aristocracy and parliamentary corruption, true effort for reform was blocked.[6]

Mary Wollstonecraft, born in late April of 1759, was a product of an oppressive, abusive home. In her quest for knowledge and independence, Wollstonecraft perceived that man, not nature, was to blame for society's grievances. *"Nature, or to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work."*[7] She believed that the development of reason would enlighten man of his error; and only by his acting upon his reason, would virtue be gained and the injustices abolished.

Egalitarianism permeated the Enlightenment's classical liberal ideology. The concept of equality illuminated Wollstonecraft's vision of womanhood. A harsh critic of slavery in the New World, she challenged the prevailing ideology of the moral and intellectual inferiority of women as well. Wollstonecraft believed that the education females received in eighteenth century England subjugated them to male authority by denying them the development of their ability to reason. Her vision of the virtuous republic would be based on the principles of egalitarianism whereby sex and property holdings would not impede an individual's economic gains and independence. Wolstonecraft, challenging government support of institutions perpetuating the economic, social, and political subordination of women, perceived education as the apex in creating a new world order. Education was the means to achieve this new society.

The educational thought of Mary Wollstonecraft was cultivated through her friendships, associations, and life experiences.

Wollstonecraft was sparcely educated in day-schools[8] until her family moved to Hoxton. There her formal education began at the age of fifteen though her friendship with the Clares. Mr. Clare, a retired invalid clergyman, fostered in Mary a love of learning and critical thought, by awakening her intellect through instruction in literature[9] and foreign languages.[10] The childless Mrs. Clare introduced Mary to Fanny Blood.[11] Fanny, who was two years older than Mary, provided her with the love and companionship of a peer and inculcated within Mary the desire to write.[12]

Wollstonecraft's life-long association with the Dissenters began in 1783 when she founded her school in Newington Green. The Dissenters, led by Dr. Richard Price, who became Wollstonecraft's mentor, were a small radical group whose political aims, according to scholar Eleanor Nicholes, were the secularization of politics, Parlimentary reform, and "the opening of careers to talent, regardless of rank or property."[13] It was Wollstonecraft's loyality and devotion to Price which spurred her to write the rebuttal to Burke's attack on Price in A Vindication of the Rights of Man.

For Mary Wollstonecraft, one's own self-development of reason and quest for virtue could only be gained by acting upon reason, and this action gave meaning to life. Wollstonecraft's writings illuminate her personal endeavor in this quest, as she sought to improve society by guiding others along the same path. *"The narrow path of truth and virtue inclines neither to the right nor left - it is a straightforward business, and they who are earnestly pursuing their road may bound over many decorous prejudices without leaving modesty behind."*[14]

Education was the means to develop reason, which to Wollstonecraft lay dormant in most of humankind. *"Reason is, consequentially, the simple power of improvement; or more properly speaking, of discerning truth. Every individual is in this respect a world in itself."*[15] Reason, to Wollstonecraft brought self-awareness, which she perceived brought one toward perfection, toward becoming more God-like. God, whose power of reason she feared, was all-knowing. He had the absolute ability to discern truth. *"I fear God!. . .It is not His power that I fear - it is not to an arbitrary will, but to unerring reason I submit. . ."*"[16] In analyzing Wollstonecraft's Analytic Reviews (1790), scholar Virginia Sapiro observed that Mary Wollstonecraft believed true virtue was "based on eternal and simple principles created by God and discovered by human beings." Wollstonecraft emphasized above all the individual and collective human ability to discover these principles and learn virtue. This perfection depends on the God-given mechanical means to discover God's will: reason. Wollstonecraft lived in the world bequeathed by John Locke. If there were no innate ideas, there could be no reckoning with God's will until one's mind developed. It is no wonder, then, that when Wollstonecraft defined the 'main business' of human life she underscored *learning* virtue."[17]

Wollstonecraft's use of the term education, according to Sapiro, is misunderstood today, whereby education is perceived as schooling or instruction. Instead, she views Wollstonecraft's meaning of education to reside in the common terminology of her day, whereby it would embrace "our current conceptions of 'child-raising' or 'socialization."[18] Yet Wollstonecraft defines education in her Vindication of the Rights of Women: *"Into this error men have, probably, been led by viewing*

education in a false light; not considering it as the first step to form a being advancing gradually towards perfection; but only as a preparation for life." [19] Mary Wollstonecraft perceived education as improvement of the individual and improvement of the social order. She drew upon her own experience in addressing the ills of her society necessitating a new educational paradigm: Developing the ability to apply reason to problems in living which would supplant standardized schemes of instruction requiring little individual thought."[20]

> *"By individual education, I mean, for the sense of the word is not precisely defined, such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulated the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the godly arrives at maturity; so that the man may only have to proceed, not to begin, the important task of learning to think and reason."* [21]

The new educational paradigm which Wollstonecraft envisioned was one based upon reason and co-education. *"Let us then, as children of the same parent, if not bastardized by being the younger born, reason together, and learn to submit to the authority of Reason - when her voice is distinctly heard."* [22] And this paradigm incorporated her belief not in the inverse relationship of men and women, but their equality, in which society would be improved by educating the sexes together. *"I therefore will venture to assert that till women are more rationally educated, the progress of human virtue and improvement in knowledge must receive continual checks."*[23]

Women of late eighteenth century England were believed to lack the innate capacity to reason. Regarded as a subordinate social class, women were legally viewed as acquiescent wards of their fathers and husbands. Many, like Lord Chesterfield, believed women "are only

children of a larger growth" and treated them as such.[24] The law of marriage, as written into the Commentaries on the English Constitution of 1758, signified the civil death of women. Not only could a married woman not claim her children or property; she also could not enter into any legal contract. Once married, she had no political or legal rights.[25]

This status was reflected in the schooling of the female sex. "Girls of the genteel status" were educated separately for the purpose of becoming graceful companions and decorative, docile sex objects for their future husbands. Furthermore, according to contemporary social critic, Dr. John Gregory, women had no use for education. Their principal goal was to "fill up, in a tolerably agreeable way, some of the many solitary hours you must necessarily pass at home."[26] Hence, boarding schools where girls would learn the art of social graces, play musical instruments, dance, and learn to speak the French language were the norm because history, philosophy, and literature were considered too strenuous for a woman's "inferior" mind. The contemporary texts of this era reveal that the proper education of the female was to develop "a girl's reason for being," that is, her success at winning men's approval by "softness, ignorance and innocence (contrived if necessary), and absolute unthinking submission."[27]

It was this audience that Mary Wollstonecraft addressed through her writings, challenging the pervasiveness of the underlying system of the social order, perceiving that the foundation of women's oppression lay in the denial of a true education. *"But I still insist that not only the virtue but the* ***knowledge*** *of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or*

*perfections) by the **same** means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of **half-being-one** of Roussseau's wild chimeras."*[28] *[Wollstonecraft's emphasis]*

Wollstonecraft's vision of the perfect education was one that developed virtue and independence.

> *"Consequently, the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render them independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason."* [29]

In her writings, mainly Thoughts on the Education of Daughters(1787), Vindication of the Rights of Woman(1792), Mary: A Fiction(1788), and Maria or The Wrongs of A Woman(1798), Mary Wollstonecraft illuminates her principles for educating women. *"It is time to effect a revolution in female manners - time to restore to them their lost dignity - and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world."*[30] She believed that if women were not educated to become independent, their actions would be based on other persons' wills, not their own. Wollstonecraft not only perceived this as being destructive to women, but also deterimental to their families. They would become tyrants within their homes, poor mothers, and unable to cope if widowed, since they have never practiced independent thought.[31]

In Mary: A Fiction, and Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman, Wollstonecraft used the novel, which appealed to middle-class women, "the half-beings;" to instruct her sex on the ill-effects of a poor education. In it she incorporated her personal experiences with the

social, civil, and political inequites women suffered. Through her main characters she articulated the disasterous effects which resulted from the despotism of an inadequate education. Both Mary: A Fiction, and Maria, or The Wrongs of Woman which she was working on when she died, present the misfortunes of women and the main characters' slow awakening to "reason" through their enduring adversities.

In the author's preface of Wrongs on a Woman, William Godwin added this section that Mary Wollstonecraft had written to a friend about her purposes of the book. *"This is what I have in view [matrimonial depotism of heart and conduct] and to show the wrongs of different classes of women, equally oppressive, though, from the difference of education, necessarily various."*[32] Wollstonecraft perceived that the rewards of an educated woman would be contrary to what was experienced by the majority of society. Being a rational individual, instead of a woman marrying for parents' wishes or property; she would marry for affection. The woman would gain respect and friendship from her husband for her competency in running a house and family. She would also fulfill the virtuous duty of parenting, by fulfilling her duties with attentiveness, wisdom, love, and control. And if the woman were left a widow, she could remain independent since the woman would be capable of managing her deceased husband's affairs. This would protect her and her children's inheritance which may be lost upon remarrying. And the woman's reward is her children's love. *"She lives to see the virtues which she endeavours to plant on principles, fixed into habits, to see her children attain a strength of character sufficient to enable them to endure adversity without forgetting their mother's example."*[33]

Mary Wollstonecraft believed that the test of virtue was not in an individual's beliefs but in his or her actions and fulfillment of his or her duties.[34] During her short life she illuminated this precept through the pen. Thoughts On the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in The More Important Duties of Life, illustrated Wollstonecraft's desire to educate her sex. By utilizing her experiences from the girl's school at Newington Green, Wollstonecraft wrote this collection of short essays on duties which a middle-class woman would encounter, which included the caring and education of infants and children, and handling servants. Wollstonecraft presents her audience with some radical, instructive ideas including advice about breastfeeding, *"The mother ought to suckle her children."*[35] She also advised them to help children develop their minds, *"Above all, try to teach them to combine their ideas. It is of more use than can be conceived, for a child to learn to compare things that are similar in some respects, and different in others. I wish them to be taught to think-thinking, indeed, is a severe exercise. . ."*[36]

Writing in an era where it was common for children to be reared by servants or in boarding schools, Wollstonecraft stressed the importance of parental nurturance and the environment in child development. She continually emphasized the importance of treating children as individuals who evolved through a process of education, rather than an acquired product.[37]

The philosophy that Mary Wollstonecraft presented to women in Thoughts on The Education of Daughters was considered radical in her era; with essays on various topics which Wollstonecraft thought eighteenth century women would confront, such as: "The Nursery"

(breastfeeding), "Moral Discipline," "Exterior Acomplishments" (stressing true education and independence), "Artifical Manners," "Dress," "The Fine Arts," "Reading," "Boarding School," "The Temper," "Unfortunate Situation of Females, Fashionably Educated, And Left Without A Fortune," "Love," "Matrimony," "Desultory Thoughts" (on treating illness & death), "Disappointments," and "On the Treatment of Servants."

The intellectual awakening of the adult female was important to Wollstonecraft. In her essays, she chided women about poor parenting, their inadequate education, and their emphasis on dress. She coaxed them to breastfeed their young, to attend to the development and instruction of their children, and to make note of the importance of thought, reading, good speech, and writing. She encouraged them to develop self-control and to consider remaining single. All of these concerns were elements of her philosophy and her program to educate women to exercise reason and practice self control.

In Thoughts, Wollstonecraft spoke to the adult female from her own personal experiences. She recommended remaining single as a viable option, basing it on her own experiences as an independent woman. She warned women about the disadvantages of being a teacher, while admitting that there were few occupations available which had not been taken over by men.

In her time period, any of the suggestions given by Wollstonecraft were considered extremist; yet today, over two hundred years later, they formulate many of our educational precepts. Wollstonecraft, in Thoughts on the Education of Daughters (1787) offered some pedagogical principles illustrating her wisdom and

prescience: 1. Encourage children to ask questions; 2. Use storytelling in teaching by telling stories and having children reconstruct them. 3. Cultivate in the sexes interest in writing and and the fine arts.

Mary Wollstonecraft published Original Stories from Real Life; with Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections and Form the Mind to Truth and Goodness in 1788. Original Stories was based on her experiences as governess to the Kingsborough daughters, twelve year old Caroline and fourteen year old Mary. Her close encounters with the Kingsborough children and their parents influenced her perceptions on the instruction of children. Their mentor, Mrs. Mason, is based on Mrs. Burgh, the dissenter from Newington Green. Whereas Thoughts on the Education of Daughters was presented in essays which offered some Lockean thought loosely intertwined with Christian moral values; Original Stories, was a series of moralized vignettes geared for children. Wollstonecraft utilized in Original Stories the relationship between two motherless children and their mentor who led them through questioning, to morality and independence[38]. "As in her two previous works, Wollstonecraft's central motivation was her strong sense of parental dereliction."[39] She explained to her publisher, Joseph Johnson,*"The few judicious [parents] who may peruse my book, will not feel themselves hurt. . .in a book intended for children. . . If parents attended to their children, I would not have written their stories; for what are books, compared to conversations which affection inforces."*[40]

In Original Stories, Wollstonecraft incorporated the use of fiction as an instructional device, through little moral tales, each comprising one chapter in the book. The chapters centered around themes, such as "The treatment of animals," "The danger of delay," "Dress," and

"Devotion." In each chapter, the mentor, Mrs. Mason instructed Mary and Caroline via her example and use of the Socratic method to figure out how to handle various situations virtuously.

The Female Reader: Or Miscellaneous Pieces In Prose And Verse: Selected From the Best Writers. And Disposed Under Proper Heads: For The Improvement of Young Women By Mr. Cresswick, Teacher of Elocution To Which Is Prefixed A Preface, Containing Some Hints On Female Education, published by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1787 under the pseudonym Mr. Cresswick, Teacher of Elocution, was one of the first thematic anthologies ever published.[41] Utilizing the example of William Enfield's *The Speaker*, an elocutionary model for male students; Wollstonecraft, who was dismayed by the infantile speech patterns of her cultivated sex, developed the collection in a sequential order, specifically for the female student to read aloud; as a means of increasing understanding and correctness in speech.[42]

Her third educational writing, Cave of Fancy(1798), was not completed nor published until after her death by her husband William Godwin in the collection of Wollstonecraft's Posthumous Works. A fragment, Cave of Fancy, or Sagesta, was Mary Wollstonecraft's futile attempt to intertwine physiognomy and fiction in illustrating the process of female education through moralistic stories. Physiognomy, theorized by Lavater, was based on determining man's ablity to reason from the circumference and formation of the head; especially the forehead. Wollstonecraft, smitten by the artist Henri Fuseli, to whom Lavater had dedicated his book, The Aphorisms of Men (1787) enlisted the main character, Sagestus, to use physiognomy to determine the characters of the dead sailors who were shipwrecked on a desert island; while a child, the lone survivor, slept. The rest of the book

pertained to the process of educating the child, whom the sage named Sagesta. The young Sagesta was instructed through a spirit whose messages were interpreted by the sage. Moria Fergerson and Janet Todd theorized that if Wollstonecraft would have competed Cave of Fancy, it would have been a replicate of Thoughts of Daughters. William Godwin wrote in his memoirs that Mary Wollstonecraft did not plan on completing Cave of Fancy. "She thought proper afterward to lay [it] aside unfinished."[43]

Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) has been considered more of a political treatise than an educational document. Yet Vindication's substance reveals that it is both a political argument for the emancipation of women and a social argument for the the education of women, as Mary Wollstonecraft first claimed,

> *"Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice."* [44]

Reading Vindication of the Rights of Woman, one discovers that Wollstonecraft's argument for the emancipation of women is based on the right to education. Mary Wollstonecraft uses this position to diplomatically challenge the British establishment for the acquisition of this right, arguing that many of society's ills were the result of women's environment [inadequate education and socialization process]. Wollstoncraft perceived this debilitated enviroment was responsible for women's lack of virtue because of their inability to reason and to control passions. This lack of virtue, in turn, maligned the social order because of the females' position as wives and primary caretakers and nuturers of the young. Wollstonecraft had postulated that children

learned by imitation. *"For it is your own conduct, O ye foolish women! which throws an odium on your sex ."*[45] Wollstonecraft's notion of the primacy of education is ascertained in her plea:

> *"Let an enlightened nation then try what effect reason would have to bring them back to nature, and their duty; and allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man, see whether they will become better, as they grow wiser and become free. They cannot become injured by the experiment, for it is not in the power of man to render them more insignificant than they are at present.* [46]

Chapter twelve of Vindication of the Rights of Women presents Mary Wollstonecraft's vision of a national educational system, conceived over two hundred years ago, and considered radical by her contemporaries. Wollstonecraft was critical of education of the eighteenth century. She was critical of the teachers whom she perceived as being *"pedantic tyrants"* because of their apathetic attitudes toward teaching. They say*"that they fulfilled their duty. . . by sending some good scholars to college:. . .*whereas they have *"sacrificed the health and morals"* of the majority. Wollstonecraft found *"schools as they are now regulated, the hotbeds of vice and folly, and the knowledge of human nature, supposed to be attained there, merely cunning selfishness places."* [47] Eighteenth century schools to Wollstonecraft were places where overcrowding existed, bad habits acquired, and stunted physical and intellectual growth occurred through the endless recitations and deprivation of exercise.[48] Mary Wollstonecraft envisioned a national system of education whose focus would be on the formation of good citizens. She envisioned an elementary day-school where *"boys and girls, the rich and poor, should*

meet together." Wearing uniforms, the students *"should be dressed alike,"* and under the same guidelines, *"submit to same discipline, or leave the school,"* with class periods no longer than an hour at a time -*"for at this age they should not be confined to any sedentary employment for more than an hour at a time,"* boys and girls, wanting *"activity of the mind,"* would be instructed in the same curriculm, fostering politeness and modesty*"without any sexual distinctions."* Attached to the school would be a playground -*"the schoolroom ought to be surrounded by a large piece of ground, in which the children might be usefully exercised. . ."*

In Wollstonecraft's vision physical exercise would become part of the curriculum, as well as *"the elements of religion, history, the history of man, and politics." "Botany, mechanics, astronomy, reading, writing, arithmetic, natural history, and some simple experiments in natural philosophy, might fill up the day; but these pursuits should never encroach on gymnastic plays in the open air. . ."*

Wollstonecraft had a keen awareness of children. *"Throughout the whole animal kingdom every young creature requires almost continual exercise."*[49] She recommended various devices for obtaining children's interests for instructive purposes. *"Conversations in the Socratic form"* would be utilized in teaching the social sciences. *"Many things improve and amuse the senses; and children would turn a deaf ear if not presented in a show." "How much time is lost in teaching them to recite what they do not understand?"*[50]

In Wollstonecraft's vision of the perfect school, boys and girls after the age of nine would be divided into two separate schools, comparable to the present day twentieth century academic and vocational tracks. Students slotted for domestic employments or mechanical trades would attend one school where they will attend class

together in the morning. The afternoons would be spent with boys and girls in separate classes, each learning their trade. The second school would be comprised of students with superior abilities or wealth. These students were to receive instruction in the dead and living languages; science; history, politics and literature. Hence, Mary Wollstonecraft intimated that all professions be open to women, while stressing equality, within each class between male and female.

> *"To render this practicable, day-schools for particular ages should be established by Government, in which boys and girls might be educated together. The school for the younger children, from five to nine years of age, ought to be absolutely free and open to all classes. A sufficient number of masters should also be chosen by a select committee in each parish, to whom any complaints of negligence, etc., might be made, if signed by six of the children's parents."*[51]

Wollstonecraft perceived her vision of education as inculcating reason and virtue, which would provide compassionate, responsible, reflective citizens willing to create an egalitarian society. She believed that by both sexes being schooled together they would become friends and marry earlier. She saw this as a preventative to lives being ruined by early debaucheries.[52] The female sex would become the companion and colleague of man, instead of his coquette or slave.

> *"To render mankind more virtuous, and happier of course, both sexes must act from the same principle. . . To render also the social compact truly equitable, and in order to spread those enlightening principles, which alone can ameliorate the fate of man, women must be allowed to found their virtue on knowledge, which is scarcely possible unless they be educated by the same pursuits as men."* [53]

To say that Mary Wollstonecraft's influence extended only as far as her argument for female emancipation is concerned, would be to undermine her impact. Her influence, though it may be seen to its

greatest degree in female education, permeated such various topics as the management of infants and early childhood education. Writing in an era where it was common for children to be reared by servants or in boarding schools, Wollstonecraft stressed the importance of parental nurturance and the environment in child development. She continually emphasized the importance of treating children as individuals who evolved through a process of education, rather than an acquired product.[54]

The mismanagement of infants in the late eighteenth century resulted in the deaths of sixty percent of those born, not counting those aborted. Child experts encouraged stimulation of infants through immersion in cold water and spanking them for crying.[55] Childhood diseases and lack of parental care contributed to the death rate of children. Ironically, Mary Wollstonecraft was working on a manuscript titled "Letters on the Management of Infants" when she died.[56] In the introductory letter, Mary Wollstonecraft addressed the public on her purpose to present methods for the care of children to preserve their health and well-being, since she considered most of the present methods ineffective.[57] There were to be seven letters on the subject. Letter II was titled "Management ofthe Mother during pregnancy: bathing"; Letter III was on "Lying - in"; Letter IV was titled "The first month: diet: clothing"; Letter V was "The three following months"; Letter VI was titled "The remainder of the first year"; and Letter VII was named "The second year and conclusion." The remaining fragment on this endeavour was Letter I which was incomplete. Enough remained to reveal the author's intention of educating the middle class

mother in how to care for infants since Wollstonecraft believed that the mothers of the lower classes tried to emulate them.[58]

Volume II of Posthumous Works of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin contains a series of children's lessons dedicated to the author's daughter, Fanny.[59] Mary Wollstonecraft began working on a series of children's books in 1795, which were geared for the two to four year old child. The books were to be an instructional series of moral tales resembling Barbauld's Lessons for Children, which had been published during the previous decade. The books were to be comprised of sequential lessons which would take the child "though a structured acquisition of language."[60] Wollstonecraft had completed ten lessons before her death. Lesson I was comprised of simple nouns, such as cat, dog, sheep, etc., nouns representing body parts, places, clothing, food, and household items. Lesson II was comprised of verbs, periods of the day, numbers, and the five basic colors. Lesson III was comprised of short two, three, and four word sentences which focus on a child's homelife; Lesson IV was comprised of four to ten word simple sentences, mostly in the second person, and Lesson V, was comprised of a conversation in the home. Lesson VI, VII, VIII were presented as a conversation with a child. All of these lessons focused on familial relationships. Lesson IX and X gave instructions for the child to follow. Lesson X was written in the imperative. Lesson XI focused on the maturation process of the child. Lesson XII illustrated the difference between the young and the old and stressed the importance of wisdom. Lesson XIII focused on caring for the dog and its appreciation.[61] The English scholar, Gary Kelly writes that this work illustrated how

Wollstonecraft perceived the construction of self and relationships via the structure of language.[62]

Mary Wollstonecraft's educational vision can be seen in a modified version of her concept, as it evolved into the concept of the common school of America and into the structure of today's school. She envisioned co-education and a common curriculum in an egalitatian public school system. She envisioned teaching strategies incorporating questioning techniques, the use of demonstrations, experiments, activites, and the demise of recitations. She envisioned instructional series, school periods set aside for physical activity, and women in professional occupations.

Analyzing Wollstonecraft's writings illustrates her presence in our educational arena, for she embraced the education of adults, infants, and children. Mary Wollstonecraft offered her era an alternative perspective regarding education and the succeeding generations her vision. She saw education as a means of obtaining the emancipation and empowerment of the individual - male and female- through the development and independence of the virtuous self.

Eleanor Flexner writes that "when Mary Wollstonecraft put her emphasis instead on awakening and training the intellect, in particular the intellect of a woman, she was arguing without precedent, at a time when the mere existence of a woman's mind not only was in question, but was of no interest to anyone, woman included."[63] We need to reclaim Wollstonecraft's perspectives and pedagogy to ameloriate the inequities and transgressions of our schools and society. While much of the educational structure advocated by Wollstonecraft has come to be, the tireless pursuit of virtue that was to permeate the structure is

largely absent. We could profit now, from a reaffirmation of Wollstonecraft's views of virtue:

> *"This I believe to be an indisputable truth, extending it to every virtue: chastity, modesty, public spirit, and all the noble train of virtues, on which social virtue and happiness are built, should be understood and cultivated by all mankind, or they will be cultivated to little effect."* [64]

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